

SUNDAY DRIVER

Whether as a first boat for those looking to get more out of life or as a downsizer for experienced mariners, many consider the Back Cove 34 to be at the top of the list. **JEFF STRANG** takes a look for himself...

A Sunday drive is a pleasure best enjoyed in good company. Just one person is enough, if it's the right person. And while the destination, and to a certain extent the catering are important, it's the style and comfort of your chariot that is the icing on the cake. And above all else a Sunday drive should be something that can be planned and undertaken on a whim, with a minimum of fuss. That is where the Back Cove 34 comes into its own.

As experienced seafarers know boating is not usually an off-the-cuff activity. Most vessels require some organisation to be ready for the journey. At a glance the Back Cove 34 struck me as being well down on the "fuss" scale. She's pretty much a jump-on-and-go kind of lady. You have got to love a girlfriend like that.

Alan Barr who with his wife owns *Aurora* knows exactly what I mean — about the lack of fuss, not the girlfriend. To be fair he probably fusses over her much more than he needs, which was obvious in the immaculate condition she was presented to us in. Another thing Alan understands is the importance of great coffee. Things were looking good — great coffee with nice company on a beautiful boat, the perfect way start the day. Thanks Alan.

GOOD BREEDING

Half a glance is all it takes to guess the pedigree of this cultured cruiser. She's a classic Maine lobster boat all day long, with her spooned bow and



gently curved stern lines although no gentleman would unceremoniously drag pots over this lady's gunwales.

As much as she is indisputably born and bred on the Eastern US seaboard (all Back Cove boats are designed and built in Rockland, Maine) for some reason the 34 reminds me more of a classic British sports car, like an MG BGT, than a muscled American thumper. This is probably why the Sunday driver theme rang true. She just has those unpretentious yet classy lines the Brits did so well in the '60s and '70s. I hope the American builders aren't offended, as it is meant as a compliment and don't worry, I am very confident she is infinitely more reliable than an English sports car from the '70s.

A GUIDED TOUR

You know you are on an American designed boat when the stateroom, even on this relatively compact 34-foot hull, has 6ft5in of headroom. Features that come to eye instantly are the stainless steel mug holders within easy reach of the bed, the raised steps to facilitate access to the island berth for those not as mobile as they may once have been, and the handy touch-switch for the floor lighting. These are all features aimed to please the boat's primary target audience, lifestyle boaters in their later years more interested in convenience than performance.

It's also a pleasure to see so much genuine timber joinery employed, the sarking on the walls runs almost floor to ceiling and a mixture of American cherry, cedar and maple is employed throughout the cabinetry.

A small private lounge adjoins the stateroom and allows a little extra space and comfort for getting organised in the morning. It has easy access to the low-maintenance bathroom. The head features a freshwater-only flush system to minimise any unpleasant odours. The shower compartment itself is to generous proportions and if my memory serves me correctly, incorporates a comfort seat and handrails. This section can be closed off from the berth with a quality curtain courtesy of Sunbrella and the entire lower living space can be locked off from the saloon by virtue of a sliding door.

The saloon on the Back Cove 34 is the primary living area and takes up more than 50 per cent of the boat's total volume. A trend for cruising craft these days is to ensure all passengers have great visibility



Owner Alan Barr in his element on the helm of *Aurora* (top). Large windows and raised floors enhance the visibility in the saloon (above). The compact galley (this photo) is adequate enough to service good friends with room for the all important coffee maker.



TO INDULGE HIS PASSION FOR A LIFE AFLOAT WITH HIS WIFE AND HIS DOG IN STRESS-FREE STYLE IS SOMETHING HE CANNOT PUT A PRICE ON. FORTUNATELY IN THIS CASE, THE PRICE WAS NOT EVEN THAT HIGH...

[HIGHS]

- ▶ Classy Maine styling and detail work
- ▶ Lockup-and-leave approach to boating
- ▶ Quality touches in the cabinetry and finishing
- ▶ Good approach to ergonomics
- ▶ Personalised air-conditioning
- ▶ Excellent servicing access

[LOWS]

- ▶ Tunnel-mounted shaft takes time to adjust to, although the sidethrusters do a great job
- ▶ Cockpit table is a bit wobbly; perhaps an upgrade would be worthwhile

Hard wearing fabrics are employed where necessary and the aft cockpit can be covered in with clears if desired.



and the Back Cove 34 meets this demand well with large surround windows. The slightly raised floor and seating levels also help maximise the viewing opportunities and I have it on good authority that occasional mal-de-mer sufferers find this philosophy to be one of the best ways to minimise its effects.

TWO IS COMPANY

Although there is ample space to entertain a cosy complement of guests (a feature Alan rates highly),

I personally liked the way the saloon is nicely personalised for two. Both the pilot and navigator travel in equal comfort, a custom skipper's seat and a plush double recliner respectively. Dual independently controlled air-conditioning units service both sides, so there is no reason to argue over the optimal climate conditions.

To my eye, navy and white striped upholstery works well, while the white gelcoat surfaces and timber trim add to the classic Jackie O look. I was also impressed with the nifty

OceanAir blinds. They look sharp and could not be easier to deploy — just don't be an idiot like me and pull them down with the window open at 20kts. Still all's well that ends well, aye Allan!

A generous galley sits opposite the dining table and runs parallel to the starboard sidewall. To be honest this longitudinal configuration is not my favourite setup for a working galley because it's just that much harder to keep your balance standing sideways in a rolling sea. However, it

would be difficult to locate anywhere else without compromising the layout in some other way.

Alan and his wife opted for the closed-in version of the Back Cove 34 in *Aurora*. This decision was made in keeping with Alan's desire to keep things as simple as possible at the end of the day's boating. The lockup-and-leave option has a great deal of appeal for Back Cove owners. The rear cockpit, while not overly large, is more than adequate for a party of four to enjoy the atmosphere in comfort, with low-maintenance seating surrounding a small table for the hors d'oeuvres.

QUALITY ENGINEERING

I was impressed with the workmanship on display in the Back Cove 34. The single 480hp Cummins QSB5.9 powerplant is accessed via an electrically-driven hydraulic ram that lifts the saloon floor. Unlike some I have experienced, opening the floor-up is a straightforward operation to complete, and the electric system can be manually overridden if necessary.

It is hard to fault the working space in the engineroom. With the floor lifted there is virtually full headroom around the motor and as much servicing room as one could ever expect. In addition to the main powerplant there is an extraordinarily quiet Onan generator.

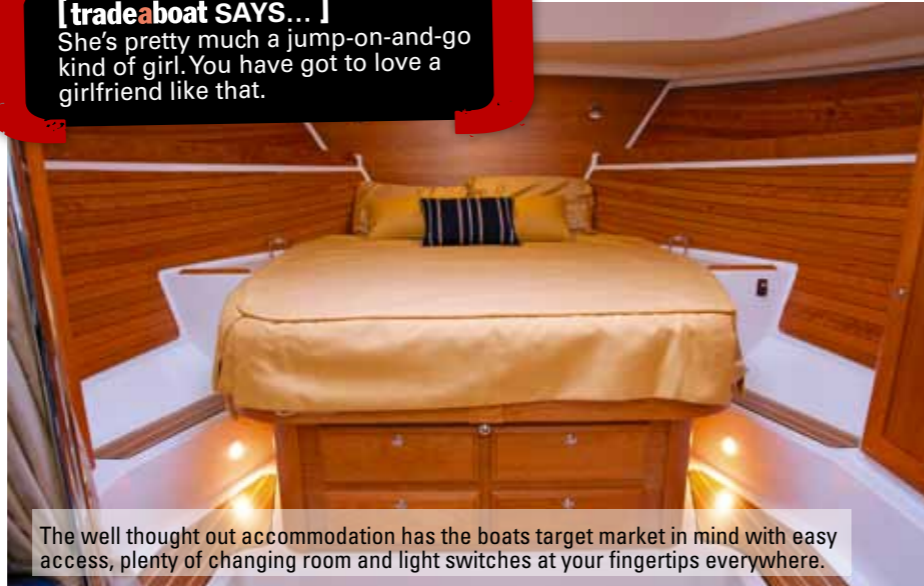
Another good example of the high level of workmanship and thought that has been put into servicing is shown by the access to the wiring behind the dash. As you can see in the photo to the right, the dash folds completely away to expose the tidy, well-labelled wiring looms. Full marks to Back Cove there — anyone who has spent time with their arms behind a dash will understand what I mean when I talk about the damage cut zip-tie ends inflicting working in a tight space with limited visibility.

UNDER POWER

With twin thrusters (bow and stern) at your fingertips any significant manoeuvrability issues arising from the single-screw, in-tunnel propeller are mitigated. I will say that in my recent experience tunnel-mounted, single-screw props do not respond well in reverse making thrusters a necessary option for boats intending to live in marinas.

The tunnel-hull comes into its own when underway, with noticeable improvements in efficiency. The *Aurora* certainly has more than enough zip for a Sunday drive.

[tradeboat SAYS...]
She's pretty much a jump-on-and-go kind of girl. You have got to love a girlfriend like that.



The well thought out accommodation has the boats target market in mind with easy access, plenty of changing room and light switches at your fingertips everywhere.



Servicing space around the Cummins powerplant will not be an issue and the wiring loom access behind the dash (insert) is just as good.



Chasing good light for photography purposes, we were forced to run from Soldiers Point Marina in Port Stephens, out through the heads. Being conscious of time I was nervous about suggesting this reasonably long run, I needn't have been. Cruising comfortably in excess of 30kts it was a short, quiet and comfortable trip, well worth the effort.

Once past the heads, we continued to charge through a regular half-metre set, which was in no way large enough to test the seakeeping abilities of this hull. What we did experience was a soft, dry ride in keeping with the brand's reputation. The fact that there was no need to close the large central window on the bridge is testament to that.

Apparently the delivery voyage to Port Stephens was conducted in reasonably unpleasant weather and all those involved were impressed with the boat's ride. Nothing I saw on this day suggested anything different.

Unfortunately in our haste I neglected to gather any meaningful fuel information first-hand, which would've been no trouble with the Cummins/Mercury SmartCraft data tracker on hand. For those that are not aware, marine industry giant

YOU KNOW YOU ARE ON AN AMERICAN DESIGNED BOAT WHEN THE STATEROOM, EVEN ON THIS RELATIVELY COMPACT 34-FOOT HULL, HAS 6FT5IN OF HEADROOM

Brunswick now controls both those companies so we can expect to see more crossover technology emerging.

IN CONCLUSION

There really is a lot to like about this good-looking, fuss-free little overnighter. My list is quite long and focuses around its simplicity. I like the way the boat carries itself with style, and displays many examples of quality craftsmanship. Little things like the dovetailed joints in the cabinetry, the laser-cut details on some of the stainless steel work, and the pretty 24-carat gold pinstripe around the hull show attention to detail that is not always present in brands that choose to manufacture in cheaper countries.

The Back Cove 34 is just the right size and configuration for those, like Alan, who are opting to downsize after a lifetime on larger vessels. Two people, neither of which need to be great mariners, can easily handle this boat. And once back at the dock, after refuelling, she really is well-suited to a hose down, lockup-and-leave approach to boating.

Dealer Jed Elderkin of Emarine Australia also cites "simplicity" as his favourite overall feature of the Back Cove range. As a former Ferrari dealer he takes great pleasure in presenting quality products he can be proud of to his customers. I have to say I enjoyed Jed's company on this day and Alan had mentioned in private just how easy his dealings with the company have been.

I think in this case it is fair to give owner Alan the last say. In his own words his Back Cove 34, the *Aurora*, quite simply makes him feel good about owning the boat. To be able to indulge his passion for a life afloat with his wife and his dog in stress-free style is something he cannot put a price on. Fortunately in this case, the price was not even that high. 🍷

Facts & figures

BACK COVE 34

PRICE AS TESTED
\$395,000

SEA TRIALS

Single 480hp Cummins QSB5.9, with four crew, ¾ fuel and half water.

RPM	SPEED	FUEL BURN	RANGE
600 (idle)	4.2kts	1.9lt/h	1399nm
800	5.3kts	3.4lt/h	981nm
1000	6.2kts	4.9lt/h	794nm
1200	7.2kts	7.2lt/h	631nm
1400	8.1kts	10.2lt/h	496nm
1600	8.9kts	14.7lt/h	378nm
1800	9.9kts	21.6lt/h	288nm
2000	12kts	28.8lt/h	263nm
2200	14kts	34.8lt/h	252nm
2400	17kts	41.6lt/h	257nm
2600	19.5kts	48.5lt/h	254nm
2800	22kts	56lt/h	248nm
3000	24.8kts	66.6lt/h	235nm
3200	26.8kts	81.8lt/h	207nm
3400	29.4kts	96.5lt/h	192nm
3450	29.8kts	96.9lt/h	194nm

*Sea-trial data supplied by Back Cove Yachts.

OPTIONS FITTED

Hardback enclosure, Onan 4.5kW generator, air-conditioning to cabin and helm deck, helm deck trim package, hardtop mast, sternthruster, anchor windlass, and OceanAir blinds

PRICED FROM
\$355,000 (inc. freight and GST)

GENERAL

MATERIAL: VIP resin-infused hull w/ PVC foam-core sandwich
TYPE: Monohull
LENGTH: 10.46m (sans anchor roller and swimplatform)
BEAM: 3.66m
DRAFT: 0.94m
WEIGHT: 6350kg (dry)

CAPACITIES
PEOPLE (NIGHT): 5
FUEL: 694lt
FRESHWATER: 300lt
GREYWATER: 150lt

ENGINE

MAKE/MODEL: Cummins QSB5.9
TYPE: Six-cylinder turbo-diesel
RATED HP: 480
DISPLACEMENT: 5.9lt

SUPPLIED BY

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LAYOUT



This example of a laser cut Back Cove logo (below) is just one example of several eye catching details.

